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ABSTRACT

A study investigated the effects of writing in a personal and a formal mode on students' understanding of literary text. Formal text-based and personal reader-based writing samples produced by 65 tenth grade students in response to two stories from D. Sohn's "Ten Modern American Short Stories" were analyzed for quality of response, audience, function, syntactic complexity, fluency, and types of response statements. Findings indicated that the reader-based or personal writing tasks enabled the students to produce qualitatively more effective responses that tended to be more fluent and constructed with a wider range of response statements than were the formal responses. Thus, in spite of their limited experience in analytic writing, the students were capable of a variety of approaches to literature. A shift in audience from teacher-as-examiner to teacher-student dialogue in the personal writing indicated a tentativeness that permitted the students to invite their reader into their explorations of the short stories. Though the two approaches were not mutually exclusive, students took different experiences from them. The results suggest that writing can be used as an effective tool for understanding literary texts. (Tables of data are included and the evaluation scale and definitions and examples of literary response statements are appended.) (JD)

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The Effects of Writing in a Reader-Based and Text-Based Mode on Students' Understanding of Two Short Stories

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Running Head: STUDENTS' UNDERSTANDING

Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, San Francisco, 1986

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Abstract

This study examined how personal versus formal writing tasks affect what students take from literary text. The writing samples produced by sixty-five tenth grade students in response to two short stories were analyzed for quality of response, audience, function, syntactic complexity, fluency, and types of response statements. Findings indicated that the reader-based or personal writing tasks enabled the students to produce qualitatively more effective responses. that tended to be more fluent and constructed with a wider range of response statements. A shift in audience from teacher-as-examiner to teacher-student dialogue in the personal writing indicated a tentativeness that permitted the students to invite their reader into their explorations of the short stories.

Authors' Note

Thanks are due to James Marshall whose insights into literary understanding aided in the development of the questions explored in this paper, to Peter Winograd who offered valuable technical assistance, and to Steve Schenck who assisted in the analysis of the written products.

The Effects of Writing in a Reader-Based and Text-Based Mode on Students' Understanding of Two Short Stories

Background

While a large portion of the writing students do in school is about literature (Applebee, 1978), we know little about what these writing experiences contribute to literary understanding. However, we do know that school reading and writing tasks tend to be limited and limiting largely because of an academic tradition that tends to stress formal response rather than personal meaning. Applebee's (1981, 1984) studies of secondary school writing indicate that typically teachers assign writing to assess rather than to encourage various responses to text and that, for the most part, when writing is assigned students must work within pre-set forms that short-circuit rather than extend learning.

From another perspective, large scale studies of reading and responding to literature (Purves, 1981) suggest that students learn "academic" responses that are primarily concerned with content rather than personal point of view. Consequently, as the National Assessment of Educational Progress (1981) has pointed out, students of all ages can comprehend literary text and evaluate their response to it, but they have difficulty

explaining and elaborating those responses. "Students in all age groups might not be getting opportunities to engage in the extended discourse. . . that teaches them to explain and substantiate their inferences in the most basic ways" (p. 24).

Taken together, these studies present a rather disturbing picture of the contexts in which students are asked to write about content-area information as well as literary text. To a large extent, we have not considered the nature of the reasoning that is fostered by the writing tasks we assign secondary school students. Writing about literature can be either an endpoint that tests for a specific form of response or a point of departure for exploring and elaborating on their own responses to literature. Consequently, we can examine the kinds of engagement formal and personal approaches require and the responses to literary texts they may foster. While this study focuses on how writing can affect how students interact with literary text, its broader burpose is to suggest how writing might be integrated into the literary education schooling attempts to provide.

Writing and Learning: Making Sense Out of New Information

In recent years, writing research has begun to examine the relationship between writing and learning from text. Newell

(1984, 1985) examined the effects of various school writing tasks on the process of composing a response to informational text and the understanding of passage-specific knowledge that results. He found that analytic essay writing enabled students to learn significantly more from text than taking notes or completing short-answer exercises. When Marshall (1986) had students respond to stories using no writing, study questions, and personal and formal essays, he found that essay writing in either mode led to better understanding of the texts than either the no writing or study question conditions. Marshall's finding that the effects of writing in a personal versus formal mode were "virtually indistinguishable", leads to the question of what special advantages, if any, do reader-based writing tasks offer to students' understanding of literary texts?

Following Britton (1970; et al., 1975), Petrosky (1982), and Bleich (1978), the underlying assumption of the present study is that writing tasks that allow students to apply personal frames of reference in interpreting literary texts provide opportunities to enrich and embellish the meanings they have tentatively created in their reading. Consequently, contexts in which students are encouraged to use writing as a reasoned and tentative exploration of their own analyses contribute to a

deeper understanding of text. This assumption is supported by recent studies of writing (Applebee, 1984) that argue for writing as an exploration of personal meaning that invites readers to share interpretations and insights. In the process of elaborating personal meaning in written language to persuade others of its importance, students shape and clarify their understanding of whatever the text may hold.

This paper reports an analysis of the quality and elements of high school students' written products that revealed what they took from two short stories when they wrote in a personal and more formal mode. Two general questions focused the research: (1) What are the effects of writing in the two modes on students' understanding of two short stories as indicated by the quality of the responses; and (2) what are the effects of writing in the two modes on the written texts the students produced as measured by word and t-unit counts, the intended audinece and function (Applebee, 1981), and literary response statements (Purves & Rippere, 1968)?

Method

Procedure

A tenth grade English teacher and two investigators

cooperatively planned a unit that was taught to each of the teacher's three academically tracked, tenth grade classes. The students attended a comprehensive high school in suburban Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

To establish a sense of context, the teacher was interviewed regarding her aims and her teaching strategies. As part of her instruction, the teacher assigned a great deal of personal writing in all three of her tenth grade classes. This writing took the form of journal entries as well as personal essays. While she did assign some formal writing about literature, the teacher's writing curriculum clearly emphasized more personal writing. With each assignment she encouraged individual interpretation and stressed the importance of student ownership of their writing.

As part of the unit, each of the 84 students in the three classes was assigned two writing tasks about two short stories. These tasks consisted of (1) personal writing, in which students were to explain and elaborate upon their personal interpretation of the stories using their own experiences as well as the text; (2) formal writing, in which students were to interpret the story by drawing their references from the text alone. Both tasks were analytic (Applebee, 1981) requiring the students to explain and interpret aspects of the stories. The tasks differed only in

focus: how do you think T.J. affected the gang (personal or reader-based) versus how did T.J. emerge as leader of the gang (formal or text-based). The two short stories, "Sucker" by Carson McCullers and "Antaeus" by Borden Deal, were taken from David A. Sohn's Ten Modern American Short Stories (Bantam, 1978). The collection is read as a regularly occurring part of the school's tenth grade English curriculum. The stories were selected because of the similarity of their themes (character analysis) and length (11 pages). Order of stories, order of assignment and story by assignment were counterbalanced across the three classes.

Data Collection

The data were collected over a period of four consecutive days in January of 1986. The schedule for each of the three classes followed a regular pattern. On the first day students received a packet containing instructions for the reading task, a copy of a short story, a writing assignment, and a planning sheet for taking notes or listing points to be included in the essay. The next day they received their packets from day one, including a copy of the short story they had read the previous day. They were also given a second packet in which to write their essay. On the third and fourth days they received new packets containing

a different task and a second story to write about.

At the beginning of each class period, one of the investigators briefly reviewed what the students would be doing and then distributed the packets. For each reading and writing session, students had the full 45 minute period in which to work. During each class session of the data collection, one of the investigators observed classes and kept track of student absences. At the end of each session, one of the investigators collected the papers.

The students were told that they were participating in a study, but the teacher also told them that the reading and writing assignments were an important part of the curriculum and that they were responsible for completing the work as they would other assignments. No course grades were given for the assignments, though students received checks for completing the work.

Measuring Quality of Response

In order to determine the effects of writing in a reader versus text-based mode on student's written responses to the stories, each essay was scored using an 8-point scale based on Marshall's scoring procedures (1986). (See Appendix A.) The

essays were scored low when they remained in a summary frame, using few textual specifics and making low-level inferences. They were scored higher when they shifted from a summary of the story to analysis of its features with support for interpretation based on details of the stories. For example, the following segment of a reader-based essay written in response to "Antaeus" received a low score (2).

> When T.J. first moved into the city he was introduced to a gang. When he met with them, it would always be on the roof of the building next to theirs.
>
> T.J. was telling them about his acre of cotton and corn back in Marion County. When they got the idea to build a roof garden they worked on getting soil and earth all winter long. They got grass seeds to plant and were trying to find watermelon seeds.

John's essay stays within a summary referring only to specific events in the story.

However, a segment of Mary's response to the same task refers to specific details of the story to present her own interpretations. She received a score of 8 for her essay.

> T.J. had a positive effect on the gang. The gang went from a group of boys with really nothing to care for and

> absolutely no appreciation of nature to a bunch of young men with something to care about and to look forward to. And they learned to have a greater appreciation of nature.
>
> When T.J. came to the city he was shocked to find no woods, grass or any plant life besides an over populated park. The gang really didn't (at first) want or care to plant vegetation on the roof but as the story progressed they started dreaming of lying on the grass. . . .

Interrater reliability for the quality measure was .74.

Analysis of the Written Products

To explore how the two tasks affected the nature of the written products, three types of analyses were carried out on 130 essays: (1) word and T-unit counts; (2) a measure of the kinds of response statements indicated by the writing; (3) an analysis of the intended audience and purpose of the writing. These measures suggest how the assignments influenced the students in constructing their responses to the short stories and, consequently, their thinking about the stories.

Word and T-Unit Counts. Total words and T-unit (Hunt, 1977) counts were calculated for all of the essays. In addition, average length of T-Units was calculated by writing task to provide a measure of syntactic complexity.

Analyzing Response. To determine how the writing tasks affected students' general approach to the stories, a measure was used to examine their mode of literary response. Based on Purves and Rippere (1968) and modified by Marshall (1986), the measure codes individual sentences or T-units as falling within one of the alternative categories of response. (See Appendix B.) One additional category (reflexive) was included as a category to capture statements in which the students applied aspects of their personal knowledge and experience in their attempts to interpret the stories. Previous studies have included such statements as personal statements or in the miscellaneous category.

Two raters independently coded a subset of 20 essays, 5 randomly chosen from the two sets of essays written in response to the two stories. Interrater agreement on the subset was 80 percent.

Audience and Function. Categories for audience and function were derived from Applebee (1981, 1984). The audience measure focuses on the implied reader-writer relationship in the text. Four categories classify school writing: 1) writing for self, 2) writing for the teacher as part of an instructional dialogue, 3) writing for the teacher in the role of examiner, 4) writing to a

wider audience.

Two trained, independent raters coded the essays, with a third rater used to reconcile disagreements. Interrater agreement on the sample was 92 percent.

The essays were also coded for overall function or purpose according to their informational, personal, or imaginative use of language. The essays in this study fell into two of the subcategories of informational: summary and analysis. With writing about literature, summary occurs when the writer generalizes and summarizes characters and events, using a narrative frame to organize the essay. Analysis requires reasons for events or characters' behaviors; typically, it involves tracing causes and effects, or developing a proposition in response to the text and building an argument for it.

Two raters independently coded the essays, with a third rating to reconcile disagreements. Interrater agreement for function was 97 percent.

When all scoring was completed, analysis of variance with repeated measures and chi square procedures were employed to determine the effects of writing task (reader-versus text-based) and story. Due to absences, complete data sets were not available for several students in each class. Thus, 19 cases

were dropped from the analysis. Results for literary response statements are reported in descriptive statistics only.

Results and Discussion

The major question guiding this study is how text-based or formal writing and reader-based or personal writing shapes students' understanding of literary texts. We will look first at the effects the writing tasks had on the quality of students' responses, then we will examine in detail the written products in order to study how the tasks led the students to shape their texts in different ways or explore the content of the stories in alternative directions.

Quality of Response

Table 1 presents the results for the effect of task on the quality of the students' responses to the stories. The results indicate a significant difference between text based ($\bar{x}$ = 5.94) and reader-based writing ($\bar{x}$ = 6.36) with the reader-based tasks producing qualitative better responses. Table 2 indicates no effect for story on quality.

Insert Table 1 and Table 2 here

This finding for the effect of task suggests that when

students wrote personally about a story, they were more likely to construct a qualitatively better essay than when they wrote more formally. Within the personal mode, the students were more able to construct extended responses that were top down interpretations of the stories. The more tentative approach students took to the stories when writing in the reader-based mode may have enabled them to consider more carefully not only the facts and details of the stories but also their meaning and significance. Moreover, in using their personal voices they were able to maintain more control over the coherence of their texts. Rather than struggling to manage the more formal response that was specified in the text-based task, the students considered their own responses in shaping their essays. The following segment from Robert's essay on T.J.'s effect on the gang illustrates the rich interpretation the reader-based task engendered.

> He (T.J.) was a leader giving them new hope. Then again he was a teacher. Never before had they done anything like this. T.J. guided them with a strong will. He also taught them to stand up for what they believed in. . . He put a perspective in their minds and broadened the things they could accomplish.

> I think it was the way T.J. was characterized that drew me to him. He was soft in voice but his words were hard as a rock. . .

Measures of Word and T-Unit

Counts of words, counts of T-units, and mean length of T-units were calcluated for each of the 130 papers produced in the study. Given that the essays were written in a more personal versus formal voice, we should expect differences in fluency. Table 3 summarizes the statistical analysis for all three measures.

Insert Table 3 about here

Students wrote significantly more words in the reader-based condition ($\bar{x}$ = 205.4) than in the text-based condition ($\bar{x}$ = 181.7), but there were no significant main effects for task on the measure of T-unit count and mean length T-unit. The considerable difference in total words for the two tasks, suggests that students were more comfortable with a more personal approach to writing about the stories. Furthermore, these tasks allowed for a greater range of experiences and prior knowledge to be tapped. Since the reader-based task, on the other hand, asked

students to take a more constrained and focused approach to responding to the texts, this result was predictable.

Literary Response Statements

The six categories of literary responses examined here represent alternative types of statements that students may make about literature as they write. As a whole, the statements represent the elements of the written responses engendered by the two writing tasks. With the exception of reflexive, the categories have been employed for a range of purposes in a variety of studies. Reflexive represents a new category developed for this particular study to code statements that refer to experiences such as reading or getting advice ("I once read in a book 'you can never feel inferior to someone without your own permission'") or to the students' first hand experiences ("That reminds me of a couple years ago I got interested in our family garden.") Reflexive is distinguished from personal in that with reflexive statements students integrate their own experience with events or characters in the story.

Given the nature of the tasks, we would expect a larger number of personal and reflexive statements in the personal writing. Descriptive statements, interpretive statements, evaluative statements, and "other" were expected to be evenly

distributed across the two writing tasks. Table 4 presents the mean percentages of the major categories.

Insert Table 4 about here

The distribution of percentages across the two writing tasks indicates that the approach students took to the stories engendered different thinking about the texts. With the text-based or more formal writing there was a more limited range of response. Nearly 50 percent of the statements were descriptive which suggests a great deal of retelling the stories. 36 percent of the responses were interpretive with an emphasis on interpretation of content. Given that the 10th grade students in the study were more experienced with personal writing, 7.5 percent of their responses statements in their formal writing fell into the personal category. Less than 2 percent of the other types of responses were found in the formal writing.

In their reader-based or personal writing students' responses were more evenly distributed across the six categories, suggesting that this writing task allowed them more range in considering their responses to the stories. Less than 40 percent

of the statements were descriptive, while 36 percent were interpretive, about 8 percent were personal and less than 2 percent were evaluative or "other". The rather large percent (15.5) of reflexive statement indicates that with the reader-based tasks students were more likely to consider what was "personally lived through" in their reading of the stories. In other words, with the more personal writing students were able to discuss their responses to the stories. On the other hand, when writing in a more formal mode which required a more public discourse about a prescribed interpretation of the stories the students took a narrower approach. This finding dovetails with the results for quality of response that revealed that with the reader-based task students moved more easily to a top down interpretation of the stories, relying on details from the text as well as their personal response for support.

Audience and Function

To gain a perspective on the sense of audience and language use encouraged by the two tasks, Applebee's (1981, 1984) measures of audience and function were employed. Each essay was scored holistically by two raters. Percentages breakdowns and chi-square results for audience and function are displayed in Table 5.

Insert Table 5 about here

There was a significant difference in the reader-writer relationship across the text-based and reader-based writing, with students writing in a teacher-learner dialogue about 64 percent of the time in the personal writing and to the teacher as examiner about 58 percent of the time in the formal writing. This suggests that the reader-based writing tasks allowed students to maintain a more tentative stance to the story. In other words, with personal writing students were more open to the possibilities of the story to explore the meaning of events and characters.

The following excerpt from John's essay on Pete and Sucker's relationship illustrates the openness with which he was able to approach the story through personal writing.

> I think the reason Pete treated Sucker so bad was because Maybelle treated him so bad also. It seems however Maybelle treated Pete, Pete would treat Sucker the same way. I don't think that was the right way for Pete to treat Sucker. All Sucker wanted from Pete was a little love, attention, and understanding. . . I think that when Pete

began to look at Sucker he began to see the same characteristics in himself that he saw in Sucker.

The essay from which this segment was excerpted was coded as written in a teacher-learner dialogue. John's tentativeness in attempting to explain why Pete treats Sucker "so bad" is expressed as thinking on paper rather than as a formal public discourse.

Michael's approach suggests a greater concern for getting the interpretation right. The essay from which the following segment was coded as teacher-as-examiner

> Sucker had unrealistic expectations of his brother. Whatever Pete told him to do he did it. For example, when Pete told him if he jumped off the garage roof with an umbrella would act as a parachute and break her fall. Sucker also should not have relied on Pete to talk to him.

Michael is sure of himself and his response to the story. He states a proposition and moves quickly to the text for support. This was also true of the essay as a whole that contained little effort to bring a personal point of view to the story.

While the two tasks encouraged students to create different relationships with their readers, no differences occurred in the purposes guiding those efforts. Table 5 presents the analysis

for function. Nearly all the writing in both tasks was analytic with only eight essays coded as summaries. That students approached personal versus formal writing differently for audience but similarly for function suggests that interpretation and analysis of literature can occur in either mode. Ultimately, what matters the most is the nature of the engagement with the stories and the kinds of knowledge the task allow students to draw upon.

General Discussion

We began this discussion by asking what writing experiences contribute to literary understanding. In addition, we might also ask how school writing can be integrated with the aims of literary education. The results of this study suggest that the nature of the writing task affects the quality of literary response as well as the language and content of the written products. With text-based or formal writing students tended to write less convincing interpretations of the stories than when they wrote in a reader-based or personal mode. Given that the students were expected to read and write about two stories without a great deal of preparation, the more personal tasks may have allowed them the opportunity to sort through their responses to find support for their beliefs. Whereas, with the formal

tasks, they may have felt compelled to develop a public discourse that was not possible given their uncertainties about the stories. This is not to say that formal writing about literature is alwyas inappropriate. Certainly after many readings and revisions we can expect students to make statements about their interpretations that are confidently and clearly articulated. However, by constantly requiring students to write on demand and within formal constraints we may not be allowing them to reason carefully about the text.

The results of the analyses of the range of response statements in the written products indicated that the reader-based tasks tended to encourage a somewhat wider range of responses than the text-based tasks. This suggests that in spite of their limited experience with analytic writing about literature, the students in this study were capable of a variety of approaches to interpretation. With personal writing in particular they were able to integrate their own knowledge and experience, not only to present their interpretations, but also to probe the meaning of the stories. They were able to maintain an ownership of their reading and writing that seemed to be missing from their more formal attempts. Britton (1975) has suggested that expressive or personal writing represents "the

move into writing most likely to preserve a vital link with the spoken mode in which up to this point all a child's linguistic resources have been gathered and stored" (p. 197).

The shifts in audience across the two tasks are further evidence for influence of the tasks we set for the students. When asked to write formally or objectively they responded with a certainty indicative of final products. On the other hand, when asked to write personally about stories they produced more tentative and yet more compelling prose. We would like to suggest that on the one hand, with the text-based approach the writing only assumed a look of certainty, that is, the appearance of knowing the correct interpretation. On the other hand, with the reader-based tasks, they were more inclined to use that uncertainty to invite their reader into their exploration. This suggests that as teachers we could employ the heuristic value of writing by concentrating our efforts on our students' attempts to understand literary texts through writing rather than encouraging them to always write in a public discourse that is appropriate only after many readings and revisions. Obviously the two approaches are not mutually exclusive of one another and our students take different experiences from them. What this study suggests, however, is that we may begin to use writing as a tool

for understanding literary texts. Perhaps, in this way our writing tasks could work more in concert with the aims of literary education.

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Table 1

The Effects of Writing Task on Quality of Response

Means (SD's)		MS Error	F(1,64)
Text-Based	Reader-Based		
5.94 (1.23)	6.36 (1.29)	6.03	4.34*

*p< .05

Table 2

The Effect of Story on Quality of Response

Means (SD's)		MS Error	F(1,64)
Antaeus	Sucker		
6.18 (1.40)	6.12 (1.15)	0.12	.08

Table 3

Word and T-Unit Count by Task

	Means (SD's)		MS Error	F(1,64)
	Text-Based	Reader-Based		
Measures				
Words	181.7	205.4	1.82	7.08**
	(67.95)	(78.82)		
T-Units	14.92	16.46	7.69	3.43
	(6.99)	(7.00)		
Mean Length				
T-Unit	12.72	13.04	3.36	0.54
	(2.48)	(2.73)		

**$p < .01$

Table 4

Percent of Response Statements by Task

	Mean Percent (SD's)	
	Text-Based	Reader-Based
Descriptive Statements	47.6	38.7
	(24.0)	(26.2)
Personal Statements	7.5	8.2
	(12.5)	(11.8)
Reflexive Statements	4.9	15.5
	(12.4)	(19.6)
Interpretive Statements	36.6	36.0
	(19.5)	(22.9)
Evaluative Statements	1.8	1.2
	(10.9)	(3.7)
Other	1.4	0.2
	(4.0)	(1.1)

Table 5

Audience and Function by Task

Audience

	Percent	
	Text-Based	Reader-Based
Teacher-Learner Dialogue (N = 72)	46.2	64.6
Teacher as Examiner (N = 58)	53.8	35.4

Chi Square	df	Significance
4.48	1	.03

Function

	Percent	
	Text-Based	Reader-Based
Summary (N = 8)	4.6	7.7
Analysis (N = 122)	95.4	92.3

Chi Square	df	Significance
0.53	1	NS*

*Not Significant

Appendix A

Quality of Written Responses about Literature

8. Top-down interpretation with specific text support and elaborated explanation. Analyzes the parts of the text in a systematic and coherent manner.

7. Top-down interpretation with limited text support and abbreviated explanation. Analyzes the parts of the text in a systematic and coherent manner. Essays that are only paragraph-length may fit this category.

6. Top-down interpretation but the interpretation is vague and incoherent. Provides little elaboration or support. Evidence tends to be general. In some cases the interpretation is simply repeated in various forms.

5. Pseudo top-down interpretation that includes particular point for discussion but bases support on concrete narrative aspects of the plot. Relationship of inferences about story and support are unclear. Writer seems to depend on reader's willingness to make connections.

4. Specific retelling with interpretation tagged on usually at the end of the essay as a kind of after-thought. Little support for interpretation, aside from association with the retelling.

3. General retelling with interpretation tagged on usually at the end of the essay as a kind of after-thought. Little support for interpretation, aside from association with the retelling.

2. Specific retelling with little, if any, interpretation. Sticks to details of the story. When interpretations are made, they are low-level inferences.

1. General retelling with low level inferences. No attempt to support inferences.

0. Off task.

Appendix B

Definitions and Examples of Literary Response Statements

Descriptive Statements

1.1 Retelling of the Story: Statements in which some part of the story is literally re-told. Quotes are also description. Low level inferences are included in this category.

"T.J. then tore the grass off the garden roof."

1.2 Description of Aspects: Statements in which the story's form, language, characters, or setting is described.

"Pete and Richard have a poor relationship throughout the story."

Personal Reaction Statements

These are statements of the writer's own reaction to or engagement with the story. Almost always stated in the first person, these may contain elements of interpretation or evaluation, but can be distinguished from both by their focus on the subjective.

2.1 REaction to Form: Statements in which the writer expresses satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the author's method.

"I don't like this story because it had not ending."

2.2 Reaction to Content: Statements in which the writer reacts to the world of the story as if it were not fictional. Includes moral appraisals or expressions of liking for specific characters, and personal statements of how people "should" act.

"Richard should shape up too."

Reflexive Statements

These statements include references to writers' experiences and knowledge that they use as examples or illustrations of their understanding of the text.

3.1 Integration of the text and writers' experiences and knowledge of the world. Statements in which teh writers' perceptions of the text are revealed through associations with their prior knowledge and events and characters in the text. These statements include explicit references to books, movies, actions and experiences of other people, and aphorisms ("The truth hurts.")

"I once read in a book 'you can never feel inferior to someone without your own permission'."

3.2 Autobiographical Narrative. Statements in which the writer moves to a brief narration of personal facts or experience.

"This story reminds me of a couple of years ago I got interested in our family garden."

Interpretive Statements
In general, these are statements that go beyond what can actually be found in the story--an inference is made based on the text.

4.1 Interpretation of Form: Statements in which the writer ascribes meaning to stylistic devices--including symbols. These statements refer to what the author does.

"T.J. was called 'Antaeus' because he gave the gang strength by making a garden."

4.2 Interpretation of Content through the Reader: Statements in which the writer discusses motivations or makes generalizations about characters or settings in the story. Includes summative descriptions of characters' personalities or feelings and reference to what characters do. These statements are subjective in nature in that writers interpret events and characters through their own values and perspective. There is a tentativeness in these assertions.

"It seems to me that through the entire selection he tries to be someone he's not."

4.3 Interpretation of Content Based on the Text: Same as 4.2 but in this case the writer takes a more objective stance to the text.

"He tries to make himself so Pete will like him."

4.4 Interpretation of Whole: Statements in which the writer sees the work as a mirror of the world generally.

"'Sucker' is a story about people's insensitivity to each other."

Evaluative Statements

5.1 Uses the criteria of emotional or aesthetic appeal.

"The story is beautiful."

5.2 Evaluation of Author's Method: Statements in which the writer speaks to how the author has constructed the work.

"The author deliberately made the ending confusing."

5.3 Evaluation of Author's Vision: Statements in which the writer judges the sufficiency of what the work is presenting, including its credibility, thematic importance, and moral significance. These may be value statements.

"The story, especially the part about the kids, is very believable because kids act that way."

6.0 Miscellaneous

--Off task

--Comparison to other authors

--Metastatements such as "I don't know."

--Discussion of the task itself